

WASHINGTON, DC – Today, Congressman Robert C. “Bobby” Scott submitted the following statement into the Congressional Record in honor of the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act:

“Madam Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize and commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

“In 1990, then-President George H.W. Bush signed the Americans with Disabilities Act into law. It was the most significant federal civil rights legislation since the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, both signed by President Lyndon Johnson. And overall it has been a tremendous success.

“The ADA was enacted to protect individuals with disabilities from being discriminated against in employment, public entities and transportation, public accommodations, and telecommunications. It created a promise of inclusion and equal opportunity, so that all Americans can live up to their full potential, encouraging and enabling individuals with disabilities to participate in the social and economic fabric of American life. As a result of the ADA, millions more people with disabilities are working, living independently, and actively using public accommodations that so many of us take for granted.

“But it was not the first legislation to do so.

“Madam Speaker, in the early 1980's, when I was a member of the Virginia General Assembly, sixty-four disability organizations formed a coalition known as INVEST – INsure Virginians Equal Status Today – to pass a state statute in Virginia to protect individuals with disabilities from discrimination. I was a Member of the Senate Committee on General Laws, the Committee that considered the legislation, and we dealt with many of the central issues that needed to be addressed, such as what constitutes a reasonable accommodation. We worked through all of those issues, and the Virginians with Disabilities Act was signed into law by former Gov. Charles S. Robb in 1985.

“Today the Act protects nearly one million residents of the Commonwealth of Virginia. This Act

acknowledged that “it is the policy of the Commonwealth to encourage and enable persons with disabilities to participate fully and equally in the social and economic life ...” and it protects Virginians with disabilities from discrimination in employment, education, housing, voting, and places of public accommodation. It preceded the federal Americans with Disabilities Act by five years, and many of the key concepts in the Virginia statute formed the basis of the ADA. The landmark Virginians with Disabilities Act is the Commonwealth’s commitment to encourage persons with disabilities to participate fully in the social and economic life of the Commonwealth.

“Five years later, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 was enacted to protect **all** Americans against discrimination on the basis of disability.

“Madam Speaker, I am proud that twenty years later we are able to look back upon the passage of the federal Americans with Disabilities Act and recognize the importance of this legislation and the changes it has made in American society. But our work is not yet done. The law is stable yet it cannot stand still; it must continue to evolve. On this 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ADA, while we acknowledge the progress we have made, we must also examine the challenges that still remain. We must continue to revisit the ADA and to examine whether it is accomplishing its purpose to the fullest extent possible, and when we find that it is not, we must be willing to make the changes necessary to do so.

“One recent example of this willingness occurred last Congress when we passed the Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act of 2008, which was signed into law by President George W. Bush and became effective on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009. The ADA Amendments Act restored the ADA to Congress’ original intent by clarifying that coverage under the ADA is broad and covers anyone who faces unfair discrimination because of a disability, and it overturned several court decisions that held that people with disabilities would lose their coverage under the ADA simply because their condition is treatable with medication or can be addressed with the help of assistive technology.

“That legislation was the direct result of the business and disability communities working together to rectify a problem that was created by the courts. It is my hope that this kind of commitment, determination and cooperation will continue into the future until we have broken down all barriers to individuals with disabilities.

“Today, we break another barrier, because Congress has taken a step toward greater accessibility by making the House rostrum wheelchair accessible for the first time. I would like

to recognize my friend and colleague, Congressman James R. Langevin, who today presided over the House Floor as Speaker Pro Tempore, as is his right and honor as a member of Congress.

“It is my hope that we will continue to break down barriers in the Halls of Congress, on Main Street U.S.A., and throughout the world.”

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